



Practice Standard: Laboratory and other Diagnostic Testing Referral

Applies to Naturopathic Physicians

Practice Standards are legally enforceable standards which set out requirements related to specific aspects of naturopathic doctors' practices. Practice standards are provided for under s.19 of the Health Professions Act. They link with other standards, policies, and bylaws of the College of Complementary Health Professionals of BC, and all legislation relevant to the practice of naturopathic medicine.

Introduction

As primary health care providers, naturopathic doctors (NDs) focus upon diagnosing and treating diseases, disorders and conditions while managing a client's health care. NDs have an emphasis upon disease and injury prevention and assisting the patient to achieve an optimal state of health.

Definitions

Critical value is a laboratory result that suggests the presence of physiological state that is life threatening. Critical results are a discrete subset of abnormal test results that require immediate action by the laboratory and the clinician.



Standards

1. ND registrants diagnose and manage diseases, disorders and conditions within ND's scope of practice and individual competence within that scope of practice.
2. ND registrants consider best practice guidelines and other relevant guidelines and resources in diagnosing and management of diseases, disorders and conditions including when recommending complementary and alternative health therapies.
3. ND registrants have an ethical obligation to be available to receive critical test results for their established patients on a 24-hour basis either personally or through ongoing call schedules.
4. ND registrants refer patients to another health care provider or facility (ex. Emergency room) at any point in time as deemed necessary in accordance with College's Naturopathic Doctors: Scope of Practice Standards, Limits and Conditions.
5. ND registrants order diagnostic services and provide appropriate follow-up that is consistent with ND scope of practice and individual competence within that scope of practice.

Laboratory Services

Enacted on October 1, 2015, the Laboratory Services Act (LSA) identifies the Minister of Health as responsible for the administration and provision of laboratory services in BC. The Laboratory Services Regulation (LSR) establishes certain healthcare practitioners as referring practitioners, who may independently refer Medical Services Plan (MSP) beneficiaries for laboratory tests paid for under the LSA, in accordance with their respective referring practitioner schedule.

Naturopathic doctors are not named as referring practitioners in the LSR.

6. ND registrants may order laboratory testing as appropriate for the patient and in accordance with their training, scope of practice and individual level of competence.
7. In alignment with section 15, patients – if MSP beneficiaries, should be informed that the laboratory services order by an ND will not be paid for under the LSA, that the patient must pay the costs of the laboratory service, and the amount the patient must pay.



8. ND registrants are responsible to ensure appropriate arrangements regarding such testing and payment for services have been made with the laboratory providing testing, including when ordering laboratory services from out of province laboratories where necessary to ensure safe and appropriate treatment for their patients.

Diagnostic Imaging Services

9. ND registrants are authorized by the Naturopathic Physicians Regulation to apply and/or issue an instruction or authorization for X-rays and ultrasounds for diagnostic and imaging purposes.
10. Ultrasound is authorized for use under the Naturopathic Physicians Regulation. However, while ultrasound may be used for information purposes only within a naturopathic physician's office practice, for diagnostic purposes ultrasound testing must be performed under the auspices of a radiologist and test results must only be interpreted by a radiologist for such diagnostic purposes. ND registrants do not take responsibility for final interpretation of diagnostic imaging studies.
11. ND registrants must inform patients that diagnostic imaging is not covered by MSP when ordered by an ND registrant.
12. ND registrants are not authorized to order CT (CAT) scans or MRIs under the Naturopathic Physicians Regulation.

Applying the Standards

- ND call schedules regarding critical laboratory results are made at the level of the practice setting. When a ND signs off to an alternative provider, there must be mutual agreement and willingness on the part of the alternative provider as to when and how the provider will assume the responsibility for the patient's care with regard to critical test results.

In remote communities where there may be few providers, registrants should seek to make specific coverage arrangements with providers in neighboring communities where possible and appropriate. It is particularly important that the ND or designated alternative provider be available to receive personal notification by laboratory physicians or designated laboratory/diagnostic facility staff of critical results for their patients' laboratory tests or other diagnostic tests.



In the event that an answering service is used as a partial solution in geographic areas where there are limited providers, procedures must include that the ND or designated alternative provider is to be contacted personally in the event a laboratory or diagnostic facility is trying to reach them concerning a critical result. Laboratories or diagnostic facilities should be informed of alternate providers' contact numbers for personal notification of critical results.

- For any diagnostic testing that the patient wishes to have covered by MSP, the patient must have a referral from "referring practitioner" per the Laboratory Services Regulation.

Naturopathic doctors with questions about their obligations regarding laboratory and diagnostic testing may contact the College at PracticeSupport@cchpbc.ca.

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Disclaimer

In the event of any inconsistency between this standard and any legislation that governs the practice of naturopathic doctors, the legislation shall govern.